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BOOK REVIEW . . .

The Death Peddlers — War on the Unborn

*Paul Marx
St. John's University
Collegeville, Minnesota
191 pp., \$1.95*

Reviewed by
Rev. Charles Carroll

This book is long overdue. The facts have all too long been kept from the public. What happens to a society that turns upon itself and its own has seldom been so dramatically reported.

The author, a competent sociologist and long-time student of family like, takes you into the "back rooms" of American medicine. He records simply what was said there.

While explaining the words used, examining the statistics quoted and referring to the issues discussed, he uses remarkable restraint in editorializing.

This book is about abortion. But it is—in truth—about something more. It is about a society in which man has lost his way. It is about a time (not unlike that which followed the fall of Rome) which is marked by the end of another great empire (the British). It is about the consequent social, economic and political dislocations suffered by the world community and their effect upon

every nation and people. It is about the disintegration of a value system that undergirded that empire or, better said, was accepted by that empire to achieve the mystical union of crown and people.

It records a meeting of a once proud and great profession, a group of physicians, psychiatrists and nurses who once were practitioners of the healing arts; recently become technicians—nothing more; who indicate *no* awareness or concern for their renunciation of an honored thousands years old traditions.

To those of us who were official observers at the Nazi doctors' trials at Nuremberg, it indicates how unconsciously and how gradually the right to life can be eroded. Not by people who are immoral but rather by people who have unconsciously become amoral. Not by people who lack good will toward their own but rather by people who unconsciously have come to distinguish between "their own" and "others". Not by people who have examined the consequences of their acts but assume the consequences will be an improvement of the "quality of life"—apparently unaware of the fact that the very arguments they advance to justify the termination of life within the womb may be used to justify termination of life outside the womb.

The physical scientists who discovered atomic energy under the

cloak of wartime secrecy did not and indeed could not engage in public discussion of the moral and ethical consequences that inhered in the application of their newly won knowledge. The gnawing afterthoughts that they experienced after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are all recorded in the writings of Max Planck, Otto Hahn, Albert Einstein, Max Born, J. Robert Oppenheimer, Harold Urey and countless others.

The life scientists have not yet been chastened by but are inviting a similar experience with potentially more horrendous consequences.

Unfortunately, Marx fails to emphasize the relationship of abortion to sterilization; the movement from the voluntary to the mandatory implicit in "cleansing the gene pool" and "improving the gene pool"; "updating death" and the proposed sale of human organs; euthanasia and cloning. Still, it is clear to the reader that the devaluation of life implicit in abortion can only lead to the further devaluation of life from conception (in the womb or the test tube) to the moment of death (however that may be defined by those who claim that life is a process whose beginnings and ends are impossible to distinguish and define).

Here, the rhetoric that is used to "educate" the public; to "influence" the legislator; and "reach" the jurist is laid bare—by the advocates of "therapeutic", "elective" and "legal" abortion themselves.

Here, the tactics that are used to circumvent the law are described by law-makers (one, a United States Senator). Here, the tactics that are used to gain money from private foundations and government agencies to promote abortion (and profit from it) are freely and frankly discussed. And finally, the tactics that are used to propagate faith in the abortionist's mind-set at schools and colleges, on radio and television, in newspaper and magazine, are clearly set forth.

Here, the grand strategy is presented. The ideas unfold in rapid succession: Abortion is the constitutional right of every woman. Sexually active minors should be emancipated (from their parents). With increased abortions, child care costs will be reduced; welfare budgets slashed. Population pressures will decrease; the quality of life, increase. As an example in human calculus, this symposium will find few peers. As an example of what can happen when a people cut themselves free from all moral and ethical moorings and allow their ignorance of history and their fear of the future to leave them wallowing in the mire of nihilism in the present, this symposium can claim few rivals. The reader is tempted to ask: "If this is not the mind and mood of modern medicine, why are so many who are so great and so obviously of a contrary mind so silent?"

In a world in which the only value would appear to be raw, naked power and—whether in Southeast Asia,

Pakistan and India, Israel and Egypt—such power is regarded by many as the sole arbiter of human problems; in a nation in which black, brown, yellow, red and white have yet to achieve a viable relationship based upon mutual respect and non-violence, this short, readable book may make a real contribution to bringing man to his senses.

Whatever good the future may hold for any of us, it will be brought about by those who, unafraid to speak of love, are still more unafraid to love and sacrifice themselves rather than sacrifice others.

They may be few. They have never been many. But in any world in which man lives and thinks and values, there will be those—in medicine, and law, and religion—who have heard the Voice of the Transcendent crying, "Love one another, even as I have loved you," for they are those who know as He that to reduce suffering, man must embrace it.

Rev. Carroll is protestant chaplain for faculty and students at the University of California—San Francisco Medical Center. He is also executive director. The Center of Human Values in the Health Sciences, and a priest of the Episcopal diocese of California.

BOOK REVIEW . . .

The Agonising Choice

*By Norman St. John-Stevas
Indiana University Press
Bloomington, Indiana
1971 340 pp. \$10.00*

Reviewed by
Joseph T. Mangan, S.J.

The main subject matter of this book is the issue of artificial contraception and the authority of the *magisterium* within the Roman Catholic Church.

The author does not explicitly identify the "agonising choice" which led to the selection of the title. Perhaps it was the choice he made in that "more agonising" situation (pp. 7 & 136) in which he found himself on the very evening on which the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* was published (July 29, 1968). On that occasion St. John-Stevas decided and implemented his decision to "strongly condemn the Encyclical in a 'Panorama' television broadcast" . . . within twenty-four hours of its publication.

Or perhaps the title refers to the "agonising choice" mentioned in